



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

August 24, 2004

News Release

19 SMUGGLED ALIENS FACED DEATH IN TRAILER

DPS traffic stop may have spared their lives

AMARILLO, Texas—The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) halted a potentially deadly human smuggling operation Monday when 19 illegal aliens were removed from a poorly ventilated, non-refrigerated tractor-trailer traveling from El Paso.

DPS troopers noticed several people in the back of the truck hidden behind pallets after making a routine traffic stop along Interstate 40, just east of Vega, Texas, and about 50 miles east of Amarillo.

ICE agents were called to the scene and it was learned that 15 of the aliens are from Brazil and four are from the Dominican Republic. An inspection of the trailer found that the aliens were not provided water, food or a toilet.

Two other aliens, Jose Antonio Cordero-Martinez the driver of the truck and a U.S. permanent resident, and co-driver Pablo Enrique Sosa, a citizen of El Salvador, were arrested as suspected human smugglers.

The aliens said they had last eaten about 5 p.m. Sunday and were loaded into the truck about 10 p.m. The truck departed El Paso about midnight and was destined for Dallas. It was about 400 miles from Dallas when it was stopped. To reach Dallas, the aliens would have had to have survived another seven hours of driving in late-August Texas heat.

“This could have been a tragedy,” said Special Agent-in-Charge John Dennis of the Dallas ICE office. “After a few more hours, that truck could have turned into a metal coffin for all 19 people, who were loaded like cattle. No one should trust their lives – or their loved ones lives – to human smugglers who repeatedly show they have no regard for human life.”

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), responsible for the enforcement of border, economic, infrastructure, and transportation security laws. ICE seeks to prevent acts of terrorism by targeting the people, money and materials that support terror and criminal networks.